



**DECISION MEMORANDUM**  
**CONCOW PROJECT, BUTTE COUNTY, CALIFORNIA**  
**FEATHER RIVER RANGER DISTRICT**  
**PLUMAS NATIONAL FOREST**  
**U.S. FOREST SERVICE**

**BACKGROUND**

Areas along Concow Road and Rim Road were burned in the Camp Fire (November 8-25, 2018). Tree mortality has occurred in areas of mixed and high fire severity.

**PROPOSED PROJECT NAME AND LOCATION**

Concow Fire Salvage Project, PALS 55461. The project area occurs at elevations ranging between 2,600 and 3,400 feet. Legal Description: portions of Mount Diablo Meridian, T22N, R4E, sections 2, 12, and 22, T23N, R4E, section 36 and T23N, R5E, sections 19 and 20. Most of the area is comprised of Sierra mixed conifer consisting of ponderosa pine, Douglas-fir, sugar pine, incense cedar, California black oak, Pacific madrone, tanoak, and white fir. The project proposes activities on approximately 176 acres within the project area.

**PROPOSED PROJECT ACTION AND DESCRIPTION**

We propose to log the trees that have died, will die from fire severity, or were skinned up in dozer line operations. Salvage would occur in the summer of 2019 using conventional or mechanical tractor logging practices.

**PURPOSE OF ACTION**

These dead, dying, and structurally damaged live trees present a safety hazard and risk to forest visitors, neighboring landowners and their homes, employees, and facilities.

**NEED FOR ACTION**

The January, 2004, Sierra Nevada Forest Plan Amendment provides for ecosystem restoration following catastrophic disturbance events through the salvage harvest of dead and dying trees conducted to recover the economic value of this material and to support objectives for reducing hazardous fuels, improving forest health, reintroducing fire, and/or reestablishing forested conditions.

Providing socioeconomic benefits, including the provision of a sustainable supply of timber, is part of the mandate of the USDA Forest Service. Providing adequate timber supplies contributes to the economic stability of rural communities in Sierra Nevada forests.

## **COLLABORATIVE INVOLVEMENT**

November 29, 2019, members of the interdisciplinary team (IDT) attended the reforestation symposium: establishing resilient forests for California's future held by the USDA Climate Hub, Forest Service, Cal Fire, UCANR, and the Sierra Nevada Conservancy. The event provided a forum where scientists (researchers) and managers could share results, advancements, and experiences related to reforestation to help frame important future forest management actions.

On February 7, 2019, FRRD timber staff and wildlife biologists spent the day near Magalia with provincial entomologist Danny Cluck. As a group they marked units using the marking guidelines for fire-injured trees in California. Danny Cluck is a co-author of these marking guidelines and served as a subject matter expert on the marking guidelines and standardizing their interpretation across the interdisciplinary team.

On February 12, 2019, 29 representatives of local government, environmental organizations, industry, federal agencies, and the Forest Service visited the Concow Fire Salvage project area as part of a larger field trip to tour National Forest System (NFS) lands in the Camp Fire area. The project was introduced at the field trip site and later that evening at the quarterly meeting of the FRRD Collaborative.

The Butte County Forest Advisory Committee was briefed on the project February 25, 2019 at their monthly meeting.

Members of the IDT visited the Concow Basin, April 10, 2019, with the Region 5 Ecology Program and discussed where reforestation should occur, what should be planted, and how we can ensure that reforestation succeeds.

April 24, May 22, and June 26, 2019, the FRRD collaborated with the Butte County Wildlands Task Force on post-Camp Fire reforestation, specifically on a Concow Basin restoration plan.

## **TRIBAL INVOLVEMENT**

Development. The following tribal agencies were notified/informed of the Proposed Action:

1. Estom Yumeka Tribe of Enterprise Rancheria
2. Tyme Maidu Tribe of Berry Creek Rancheria
3. Concow Maidu Tribe of Mooretown Rancheria
4. Mechoopda Indian Tribe of Chico Rancheria
5. Konkow Valley Band of Maidu Indians

On February 28, 2019 the District met with the Tribal Chairwoman of Konkow Valley Band of Maidu Indians. As part of a conversation regarding tribal interests and Forest Service activities we discussed this project.



## **PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT**

The project was entered into PALS and appeared on the Plumas National Forest Schedule of Proposed Actions (SOPA), February 12, 2019, as well as the Feather River Ranger District 10 year Strategic Plan and Forest Program of Work (POW). The project was updated and revised, incorporating current project development design features, involving public input, using specific resource specialists for review and analysis.

Scoping. Public scoping was accomplished through the following methods:

1. On February 25, 2019, we sent a project description and invitation for scoping to 86 representatives of Federal, Tribal, State, and local governments, non-government organizations, industry, education, utilities, and members of the public.
2. We received two comment letters during scoping that are part of the project record. Sierra Pacific Industries (SPI) encouraged the project be brought to market as quickly as possible to preserve timber value. The American Forest Resource Council (AFRC) provided a letter of support.

On April 4, 2019, the project was updated to propose reforestation and maintenance activities and improvement of water control structures.

## **ANALYSIS AND REVIEW**

Given the project brief, project initiation notice, stakeholder input, public scoping comments and follow up information a comprehensive review and analysis was done of this project by the FRRD IDT. The review and analysis for botany (July 1, 2019), soils and watershed (April 25, 2019), and wildlife (April 30, 2019) are incorporated into the project record.

## **LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE**

As the responsible official, I am responsible for evaluating the effects of the project relative to the definition of significance established by the CEQ Regulations (40 CFR 1508.13). I have found that the context and intensity of the analyzed resource areas do not meet the threshold nor the criteria for extraordinary circumstances or potential negative or significant effects in the area of potential effect.

## **RESULTS OF REVIEW AND ANALYSIS - FINDINGS**

I find that there are no extraordinary circumstances that would warrant further analysis and documentation in an EA or EIS. I took into account resource conditions identified in agency procedures that should be considered in determining whether extraordinary circumstances might exist:

- Federally listed threatened or endangered species or designated critical habitat, species proposed for Federal listing or proposed critical habitat, or Forest Service sensitive species – Forest Service sensitive species, management indicator species, and migratory bird species (wildlife and aquatics) will not be affected. There are no concerns for species

of conservation concern (rare plants).

- Flood plains, wetlands, or municipal watersheds – None are present.
- Congressionally designated areas such as wilderness, wilderness study areas, or national recreation areas – None are present.
- Inventoried roadless areas or potential wilderness areas – None are present.
- Research natural areas – None are present.
- American Indians and Alaska Native religious or cultural sites – One Native American cultural resource has been recorded in the project area.
- Archaeological sites, or historic properties or areas – Two historic cultural resources have been recorded in the project area. One has been evaluated under the National Register of Historic Places and was determined to be Not Eligible and therefore will not be protected from project activities and one will be protected from project impacts. All sites that have not been evaluated for the NRHP shall be considered potentially eligible and therefore will be protected until such time as an eligibility determination is made. These sites will be protected from project impacts through the use of standard resource protection measures set forward in the Regional 106 Compliance Programmatic Agreement. Given the above, the project as currently designed will have no effect on heritage resources.

## CUMULATIVE EFFECTS

Established by the Chief, this is one of a category of actions which do not individually or cumulatively have a significant effect on the human environment and which have been found to have no such effect in procedures adopted by the agency in implementation of regulations (40 CFR 1508.4).

The analysis report for soils and watershed addresses why cumulative effects would have no significance for this project.

## DECISION

I have decided to approve the project and proposed action with the requirements, design features, best management practices, or mitigation measures listed in this Decision Memorandum and in Appendix A.

I am authorizing salvage harvest of approximately 176 acres of dead and dying trees using conventional or mechanical tractor logging practices. Trees will be marked using the marking guidelines for fire-injured trees in California.

Re-entry may occur up to 3 years to remove any additional danger trees for additional volume. Trees to be removed under this project will be designated with Blue Paint for cut tree mark in the low severity areas or Leave Tree mark of white paint will be used in high severity fire areas.

I am also authorizing reforestation and maintenance activities to include: site preparation which can include biomassing, hand-cutting, hand- or grapple-piling and pile burning; planting;



grubbing after planting; and a variety of maintenance activities including mastication, hand-cut and hand- or grapple-pile, pile burning, prescribed fire, and targeted grazing. Maintenance could be needed for a period of 40 or more years. Continuing to collaborate with researchers and partners, planting could consist of conifer or hardwood species, natural regeneration, or some combination that is appropriate for future climatic conditions following adaptive management. We intend to pursue internal or external sources of funding for monitoring of reforestation activities.

There is a need to improve roads to reduce the amount of sediment from roads that reach streams. To protect water quality, roads will be modified by adding drainage structures such as critical dips, rolling dips, dips with leadoff ditches, and ditch relief culverts, and by out-sloping certain segments of road. Other activities include rocking inside ditches and rocking segments of road.

The Camp Fire, while killing most of the adult non-native invasive plants (NNIP) in the project area, has likely stimulated sprouting of the long-lived seed bank these species produce. In the project area, I authorize including use of herbicides along with mechanical (cutting, pulling) treatments to control or eradicate NNIP and to prevent spread into new areas.

This action is categorically excluded from documentation in an environmental impact statement (EIS) or an environmental assessment (EA). The applicable category of actions is identified in agency procedures as 36 CFR 220.6(e)(13), *salvage of dead and/or dying trees not to exceed 250 acres, requiring no more than 1/2 mile of temporary road construction*. This category of action(s) is applicable because the actions authorized in this decision are activities carried out routinely by the agency.

## **FINDINGS REQUIRED BY OTHER LAWS AND REGULATIONS**

This decision is consistent with the Plumas National Forest Land Management Plan, as amended by the 2001 Sierra Nevada Forests Plan Amendment (SNFPA) supplemental EIS and ROD.

## **ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW (APPEAL) OPPORTUNITIES**

This Decision does not provide for any “appeal” or “objection” opportunities. All public and stakeholder input was received and considered during the FRRD collaborative process for this project. Once this Decision is signed the project or proposed action may be implemented immediately, notwithstanding any other law or regulation from another agency that would preclude its immediate implementation.

## **IMPLEMENTATION DATE AND REQUIREMENTS**

This action may be implemented immediately following the delivery and discussion of the Regulatory Requirements, Best Management Practices (BMPs), Design Features, and/or Mitigation Measures required by this Decision Memorandum with those responsible for implementation. A notice of receipt or acknowledgement must be received by the Responsible



Official or their designee and maintained with this Decision Memorandum prior to implementation and maintained until the project is complete and reviewed by District officials.

## CONTACT

For additional information concerning this decision, contact: Clay R. Davis, District Planner, email [clay.davis@usda.gov](mailto:clay.davis@usda.gov), phone 530-532-8940 or Eric J. Murphy, Timber Management Officer, email [eric.j.murphy@usda.gov](mailto:eric.j.murphy@usda.gov), phone 530-532-8922.

David B. Brillenz  
District Ranger  
Feather River Ranger District  
Plumas National Forest

1 July 2019

Date

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# Concow Fire Salvage Project

Salvage/Reforestation Units - Unit Number

